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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2009

US Embassy Ankara Media Reaction
Prepared by Public Affairs Information Office on a daily basis

Media Highlights:

How US is Playing

Iran Missile Test: "Iran Plays With Fire" is how mainstream Milliyet describes Iran's 12/16 test of a new medium-range missile, noting that "while the West expects Iran to take steps for negotiations, Iran has challenged the world." Liberal Radikal headlines the "West is Angry With Iran's Missile Test" emphasizing "the US and Western countries branded as provocative Iran's test-firing of an upgraded version of its most advanced missile, which is claimed to be capable of hitting Israel, Arabic countries, Turkey, and parts of Europe." The paper quotes US State Dept Spokesman Ian Kelly as saying, "these kinds of tests can only undermine Iran's claims of peaceful intentions." In "Washington Tightens Sanctions On Iran," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet comments on Iran's provocative timing and notes that US lawmakers have approved expanded sanctions measures against Iran. Islamist-oriented Zaman goes further, predicting "US Will Respond with An Exercise to Iran's Missile Test" next month in the Pacific. In "US-Israel and Iran: Potential Confrontation," Zaman columnist Fikret Ertan opines on the danger that "both sides are giving messages to each other through missile tests" and predicts US missile tests next month will accelerate tensions.

US Bombs Yemen: A front page story in Islamist Yeni Safak claims "The US is carrying out massacres in Yemen." Similarly, HaberTurk and Cumhuriyet report that local Shiite sources in Yemen confirm that US air force bombing of Shiite-controlled areas have killed "at least 120." Stories mention the US decision to treat Yemen as the new headquarters for Al Qaeda. In "Are We About to See a War Between Iran and Saudi Arabia?" Yeni Safak columnist Ibrahim Karagul wonders if the US has opened a new war front in Yemen. Since there is a civil unrest between Shiites and Sunnis in Yemen, and because "the US started bombing the Shiite areas" the writer concludes there's growing danger: "all of this might turn into a war between Iran and Saudi Arabia with the US backing the Saudis."

Gordon: In "Turkey is Not Distancing from West" leftist-nationalist

Cumhuriyet highlights A/S Philip Gordon's remarks at a 12/15 Congressional hearing that "it will be a wrong impression to consider Turkey as turning its back to the US and Europe" and his praise of Turkey's regional role: "Turkey plays an active role in its region and is seeking for itself for an important role." Today's Zaman emphasized Gordon's comment that "the benefits of Turkey conducting equal relations with its neighbors for the US and the West outweigh its harms." The paper further opines that the PM Erdogan visit was "an opportunity to diversify the strong political and military cooperation between the two allies with the launch of the initiative aimed at boosting trade and investment ties. The initiative is "widely considered to be another concrete sign of the mutual desire to make the model partnership more substantial." Gordon speech is carried on the Wires:

Other News

Interior Minister Atalay: "We will eliminate terror and lift democratic standards." All TV channels broadcasted live Interior Minister Atalay's midday press conference on the Government's next steps on regional unrest and reforms. In summary, Atalay said "Violence is not a way to seek for rights in democracies. We will continue to act with determination on eliminating terrorism as well as lifting democratic standards. We will take some steps in the parliament in the short and the mid-term. Atalay asked opposition and media to act with common sense and "not exaggerate events." Atalay said new measures would include: establishing an independent HR agency; establishing an independent committee to look into complaints about law enforcement; establishing a committee to prevent discrimination; and "we also will try to enact as soon as possible the draft law on the establishment of a Public Order and

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Security Undersecretariat. Regarding the DTP, Atalay noted he met with banned leader Ahmet Turk on 12/13 and noted the upcoming trilateral meeting with the US, Turkey and Iraq. In liberal Radikal columnist Murat Yetkin observed: "The government wants to see DTP members back in the parliament and Minister Atalay is working on this issue." The writer believes that DTP is ready to cooperate only if "reforms, including change in political parties and election law are introduced to the parliament." Similarly mainstream Sabah's Mehmet Barlas calls the government to act on the reforms even more determinedly: "the AKP will be more powerful if works toward comprehensive democratization package, including constitutional changes."

DTP Resignations on Friday: "Door is open to Come Back" (Cumhuriyet) To avoid mass protests by their supporters, Mainstream Sabah reports that DTP deputies will not resign en masse on Friday. Instead, DTP deputy chairs Selahattin Demirtas and Gulden Kisanak will submit their resignations to the parliament tomorrow. DTP leader Ahmet Turk called for commonsense regarding the incidents in Mus and said "our actions should not harm either the shopkeepers or the people. However, it is necessary to show reaction with commonsense within the framework of real democracy." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak quotes Ahmet Turk as saying "the people do not want us to leave the parliament. We also considered the parliament as the only address to resolve the problems. However, this parliament doesn't tolerate our differences." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet's fronts "Door is Open to Come Back" and reports that despite the resignation of 19 DTP deputies, the party will keep open the opportunity to return if concrete steps are taken on election and party law reforms. Meanwhile, NTV, CNN Turk, Show TV and all other TV channels last night featured scenes showing DTP signs across Turkey have been replaced by the new ones proclaiming the "Peace and Democracy Party" (BDP).

"Freedom for Gaza" Convoy Left Sakarya for Ankara

Turkish Red Crescent and major television stations along with web sites report a motorcade of 200 vehicles taking humanitarian aid to Palestine from London arrived in Istanbul yesterday. The motorcade left Sakarya for Ankara which will then be transported to Gaza.

TGS Chief Basbug Responds to Terror Charge

NTV at midday reported that during a terror summit with the other commanders in Trabzon, Chief of General Staff General Basbug told journalists the "PKK and its supporters can link terror activities

with the Turkish Armed Forces," but warning "the politicians and the media members cannot do that and they should not do it."

Copenhagen: "No Consensus For Climate" (Cumhuriyet)
Turkish media are predicting failure in Copenhagen and note that "the clock is ticking." Liberal Radikal asks "Will the World Return Back With Empty Hands?" and says forcing agreement among 192 nations is like "forcing a lazy kid do his homework." Mainstream Sabah headlines "Summit is on the Streets" and observes that "hundreds of protesters were arrested outside the Copenhagen climate conference after violent clashes with police." Meanwhile, Today's Zaman reports extensively that Turkey's climate change presentation in Copenhagen drew fire from environmental civil society groups which say their views were not taken into consideration. Though Environment and Forestry Ministry official Fulya Somunkiranoglu explained that Turkey's national strategy includes encouraging renewable sources and nuclear energy, Greens of Turkey official Devin Bahceci argued that Turkey's continued use of coal as its primary energy source "hinders the climate change fight" adding that "we have clearly seen that environmental organizations do not have a place in the government's decision making process."

SILLIMAN